

Commentary/ **Harold Weisberg**

Questioning those who continue

What Lucien Heichler writes (Opinion/Commentary) is as fundamentally anti-American as anything I can remember. The thrust is that if anyone, particularly Jews, does not agree with any U.S. policy at anytime that "raises questions about loyalty."

He says that if American Jews believe in policies "at variance with those of the United States . . . you are laying yourselves open not only to time-honored anti-Semitic hostility and slander, but to reasonable, even justified suspicion of divided loyalty and potential disloyalty to" this country.

In seeking to accredit himself Heichler says he is "a survivor of the Holocaust" who "came to America over 50 years ago." Both statements cannot be true because the Holocaust, as distinguished from Hitler's earlier anti-Jewish practices, had not then begun.

There is nothing more basic in true American belief than the right, no, really the obligation, of Americans to oppose policies with which they do not agree.

To the Heichler-minded those Americans, of whom I was one, who opposed our government's policy of not meeting its obligations to the very first democratically elected government of Spain, were subversive. The fact is that the France regime was fascist, part of the Hitler-Mussolini axis. It was able to become the murderous anti-democratic dictatorship it was only because of axis military participation and support. This was immediately hurtful to the U.S. and the rest of the free world because it was the proving ground for Hitler's newest military equipment and policies, such as dive-bombing, which extended to innocent civilians.

To those so-minded it was subversive to oppose U.S. policy that had the effect of helping both Hitler and Mussolini when under international law we had the obligation not to support those who invaded and conquered other countries — and the consequences to the United States and other countries was absolutely disaster. It made Hitler more powerful and better able to kill Americans and others.

To those so-minded it was subversive and better able to kill so many thousands of Americans as, for example, in providing Japan with

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to speak out on Israel

steel, the very steel that was used at Pearl Harbor and throughout the war, especially in the Japanese navy.

There have been innumerable additional wrong and self-hurting U.S. policies. Traditional and correct American belief is not to rubber-stamp whatever policy, often whim, of government. It requires that those not agreeing with such policies oppose them.

In my younger writing days as a reporter I exposed a series of Nazi cartels and their interference with defense preparation. Such extraordinarily important inventions as synthetic rubber and synthetic gasoline were denied us by our cartel arrangements with the Nazis. But those cartels existed only because of a very wrong U.S. policy.

Both inherent and explicit is Heichler's diatribe against Jews who do not agree with the current Bush Middle East policy is that opposing this Bush policy makes me and most other American Jews subversive, unworthy of trust and properly candidates for official subversive listings.

Heichler himself is fortunate to have escaped the U.S. policy of denying most Jewish refugees from Hitler entry into the United States, a policy of almost all the world. The most dramatic illustration of this is our refusal to permit the steamship St. Louis to dock and unload a crowded shipload of European Jews who were thus forced back to be incinerated. Thousands of Jewish children who had been gathered on the Mediterranean coast of France would have survived were it not for the fact that not a single country in

the entire world would accept them.

There are innumerable similar instances. To those so-minded this was as it should be, national policies being always perfect, another thrust of his article, and those who disagreed were "disloyal" and unworthy of trust.

Some of the most prestigious and influential of American Jews, including even a Supreme Court justice, supported the U.S. policy of denying entry to Jews who escaped Hitler.

Heichler reflects the opposite of what authentic American belief is in insisting, as he does, that the policy of any administration is automatically the correct policy although the education that qualified him for his "profession as a member of the American diplomatic service" should have given some inkling of the terrible catastrophes from some of those policies.

Heichler does not believe as our founding fathers believed. He is an unquestioning supporter of whatever U.S. policy he was paid to support.

Nowhere in his article is there any effort to explain to his readers the

background of the current Middle East tragedies or what is right and wrong there. He just assumes that Bush is perfect and correct. He does not address, if at all possible, how claims can be fairly resolved when two peoples each have legitimate claims to the disputed land. (Wrong policies within his lifetime and mine are the direct cause.)

Although a man with a "profession" of diplomacy he does not address the solutions or absence of solutions of the past or what is true, and how it is entirely inconsistent with them.

In short, his article is official propaganda to which he adds a McCarthyite threat.

What is really "knee-jerk" in his diatribe is not "accusations of anti-Semitism," justified as he makes

such a charge against himself. What is "knee-jerk"? It is his blind, unthinking, uncritical support of U.S. policies. They always change and are always supported through all their changes by the Heichlers, without regard to what the world has learned from terrible aspects of world history.

Throughout he expresses his own prejudices and biases, as in the absolutely indecent allegation that Israel is a "a fascist police state" because of its treatment of "its own 'colored' (Oriental) i.e. Asian and African) Jews."

He can say this with what is so well-known about the hazard, the great and continuing cost to Israel of saving all those black Ethiopian Jews, of keeping them when they cannot and do not contribute to

Israeli society, of educating them so that they can — of adding all these enormous costs to the monumental national debt. This to Heichler is "fascist."

He does unbag a cat. He as much as says that Bush's new policy, the policy Heichler supports, is to abandon Israel after all its loyalty to the United States at such great cost to it, most recently in not retaliating for all those Iraqi Scuds that did so much damage to it because living with that terror served U.S. interests and policies.

The new Bush policy is to form alliances with the Islamic world, which Heichler himself describes, as "unstable" and "volatile," almost all of Islam supports terrorism and is tyrannical.

Why this new policy?

Because our "strategic interests" require it. How he does not say. He cannot because it is not true.

And why is this so important now? Because of his rewriting of well-known history. "For 40 years Israel has been an albatross around the neck of U.S. policy, making it difficult or impossible to pursue a truly advantageous foreign policy in the Middle East."

He does not explain this and for those who understand those things, no explanation is needed.

As a boy Heichler escaped Hitler, but his mind never did. In his article he is an unashamed exponent of authoritarianism, of blind, unthinking support for any and every policy of any and every administra-

tion, no matter how faulted, and to that he adds the clearly-stated threat of McCarthyite retaliation, alleging that all who do not agree with any and every policy are disloyal and are properly subject to retaliation.

He could not be more completely and unalterably the enemy of authentic traditional Americanism. That requires a full airing of all beliefs in freedom. Unlike Heichler, real Americanism does not presume that any president or any policy is always perfect and outside public criticism.

Only authoritarians believe as he does.

Harold Weisberg, who lives in Frederick, has written commentaries in the past for The Frederick News-Post.